

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon voted today for the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA), which passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 394 to 25. H.R. 1495 includes authorization for over \$2 billion in projects for south Louisiana, including full authorization for the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane and storm protection system, a comprehensive federal coastal restoration plan, closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, and channel deepening at the Port of Iberia. The bill also authorizes numerous other water resource projects throughout the country. April 19, 2007
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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon voted today for the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA), which passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 394 to 25. H.R. 1495 includes authorization for over \$2 billion in projects for south Louisiana, including full authorization for the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane and storm protection system, a comprehensive federal coastal restoration plan, closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, and channel deepening at the Port of Iberia. The bill also authorizes numerous other water resource projects throughout the country.

"Getting this water projects bill through the House is a major victory for south Louisiana and I am pleased so many of our priorities were included," said Rep. Melancon. **"For too long, Louisianians have been asked to wait patiently while Congress hemmed and hawed over passing WRDA. Building levees, restoring our coastal wetlands, and closing MRGO are not projects that we can afford to put on the back burner while people in Washington debate year after year whether to get involved. We need cooperation from the federal government and the Army Corps now."**

Congress is supposed to pass a new WRDA bill every two years. However, no new WRDA bills have been signed into law since 2000 because the House and Senate have repeatedly been unable to reach a compromise on the legislation since then. As a result, many vital projects in south Louisiana have been stalled, awaiting authorization from Congress. The new House and Senate leadership have indicated that they will make passing WRDA a priority this Congress, and today's passage of the House WRDA bill reflects that commitment. Senate leadership has indicated that Chamber will be voting on their WRDA bill in the coming weeks.

"Today, we made a giant step forward in getting these projects started. This Congress is committed to finishing the job and getting a WRDA bill to the President as soon as possible for his signature. I thank Chairman Jim Oberstar for getting WRDA to the House floor for a vote so quickly, and for working with me and the rest of the delegation to make sure Louisiana's needs are met in this legislation. He has been a true friend to

Louisiana, and I appreciate his leadership in the House in supporting our hurricane protection and coastal restoration needs."

The WRDA bill also addresses the need for strong oversight and reform of the Army Corps of Engineers. The bill includes language requiring independent peer review for any Corps project over \$50 million in cost. Rep. Melancon also supported an amendment, which passed, directing the Secretary of the Army to update the principles and guidelines that the Army Corps of Engineers uses in the formulation, evaluation, and implementation of water resources projects. The amendment would require the Secretary to consult with other agencies and the public in developing the new principles and guidelines.

Rep. Melancon said, **"Projects without accountability are not enough. When the federal levees protecting St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Orleans, and other coastal parishes failed after Hurricane Katrina, hundreds of people lost their lives and the region suffered billions of dollars in damages. This bill will require that the Corps step outside its bubble and consult with other engineers and the public that will be affected by the projects they build."**

Prior to passing WRDA, the House also passed the Manager's Amendment that included several key provisions Rep. Melancon had asked Chairman Oberstar to add to the bill. Specifically, the amendment includes language drafted by Rep. Melancon to require that the federal government cover the future cost of operating and maintaining the locks and floodgates that will be built as part of the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane and storm protection system.

Furthermore, the amendment also includes Rep. Melancon's provision to assist the Port of Terrebonne with its efforts to secure federal assistance with improving the Houma Navigation Canal, in accordance with efforts to provide comprehensive hurricane and flood protection for Houma and surrounding communities. Currently, the Corps of Engineers is conducting a feasibility study to determine the national economic development benefits associated with improving the Canal. The Melancon provision requires the Corps to evaluate the predicted increase in contracts for new energy exploration and contracts for the fabrication of energy infrastructure when calculating the economic benefits that would result from carrying out the project. Typically, these contracts are not included in the Corps' feasibility studies, putting Louisiana's offshore oil and gas fabrication ports, like the Port of Terrebonne, at a disadvantage.

WRDA includes the following projects for south Louisiana:

Fully authorizes the Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico Hurricane and Storm Protection System

- **\$886,700,000 authorized** for hurricane protection (\$576,355,000 Federal Share). This 72-mile system of levees, locks and floodgates will provide hurricane and flood protection to about 120,000 people and 1,700 square miles in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes who currently have no hurricane protection.

- Morganza has been on the drawing board for over a decade, but has constantly been delayed.

- Morganza was originally authorized in the last WRDA to be signed into law in 2000, but it was authorized pending a favorable report from the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps was over a year late in completing the report, so authorization expired. Since then, no new WRDA bills have been signed into law so Morganza is still being delayed.

- At Rep. Melancon's request, the Manager's Amendment includes a provision to require that the federal government cover the future cost of operating and maintaining the locks and floodgates that will be built as part of the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane and storm protection system.

- Sen. Landrieu and Congressmen Baker and Melancon worked unsuccessfully through the final hours of the 109th Congress to authorize the project through separate legislation since it was clear the 2006 WRDA bill - which included authorization for Morganza to the Gulf - was not going to pass. Their efforts were blocked by a procedural move in the Senate by a Senator from Oklahoma.

"Morganza will offer hurricane protection to about 120,000 people in south Louisiana who currently have no defense against storms and are like sitting ducks in the path of the next killer hurricane," said Rep. Melancon. **"The people of Terrebonne and**

Lafourche need this protection so desperately, they have been taxing themselves for years to try to build parts of the levee system on their own. It's long past time the federal government stepped up and became a partner on building Morganza."

Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Ecosystem Restoration Plan - Addresses comprehensive coastal restoration throughout Louisiana's Coast and creates a partnership between the federal government and the state of Louisiana to move forward with coastal restoration.

- Incorporates the state's master plan into recovery efforts and establishes a task force to implement the plan.
- Total, authorized and contingently authorized: **\$1,012,900,000**
- Streamlines authorization for certain coastal restoration projects by allowing them to be authorized by relevant House and Senate committees, instead of waiting for the next WRDA bill to authorize it. Initial projects authorized in LCA portion:
 - MRGO Environmental Restoration-\$105,300,000
 - Small diversion at Hope Canal - \$68,600,000
 - Barataria basin barrier shoreline restoration- \$242,600,000
 - Bayou Lafourche freshwater reintroduction- \$133,500,000
 - Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove- \$278,300,000

- **Total, LCA projects authorized immediately: \$828,300,000**
- Projects authorized, contingent on a favorable Chief's Report from the Corps
- Land Bridge between Caillou Lake and the Gulf- \$56,300,000
- Gulf Shoreline at Point Au Fer Island- \$43,400,000
- Modification of Caernarvon Diversion- \$20,700,000
- Modification of Davis Pond Diversion- \$64,200,000
- **Total LCA projects with contingent authorization: \$184,600,000**
- Calls for expedited reports on several other Louisiana projects.
- Establishes the Louisiana Water Resources Council, for peer review of projects.
- This measure also directs the Corps to implement a program for the beneficial use of dredged material, and authorizes \$100 million for the beneficial dredge program.

"Saving our disappearing coastline is one of the most critical challenges facing south Louisiana today," said Rep. Melancon. **"Authorizing the LCA plan will make the federal government a partner in restoring our coastal wetlands in south Louisiana."**

Closes the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet

- The MRGO is deauthorized for navigation and requires the Corp to make a plan for closure and restoration.
- Rep. Melancon has asked the Corps to build an earthen dam across the MRGO to permanently close the channel.
- \$105,300,000 for environmental restoration efforts in the area as part of the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Ecosystem Restoration Plan

"MRGO has been a threat to St. Bernard Parish for years, and it's long past time we closed it for good," Rep. Melancon said. "This bill not only orders the Corps to close MRGO, it authorizes over \$105 million to restore the fragile wetlands around it that have been damaged or destroyed by saltwater intrusion from the channel."

Port of Iberia Channel Deepening

- \$131,250,000 authorized with an estimated federal cost of \$105,315,000
- Changes authorized depth level of the Acadiana Gulf of Mexico Access Channel from its current 12 feet to a depth of 16 feet.
- In 2006 WRDA, which never passed the whole Congress, this authorization was

included as contingent upon receiving a favorable Chief's Report from the Corps. The Corps signed off on the study in December 2006, so the 2007 WRDA gives final authorization.

"The Port of Iberia has been pushing to get their channel deepened for years so that it can accommodate larger barges and offer more support for our offshore energy economy," said Rep. Melancon. "This project will bring more jobs and businesses to Iberia Parish, and I am pleased we were able to include it in this year's WRDA."

Oil and Gas Fabrication Contracts - Port of Terrebonne added at the request of Rep. Melancon

- Requires the Corps to evaluate the predicted increase in contracts for new energy exploration and contracts for the fabrication of energy infrastructure when calculating the economic benefits that would result from carrying out the project. Typically, these contracts are not included in the Corps' feasibility studies, putting Louisiana's offshore oil and gas fabrication ports, like the Port of Terrebonne, at a disadvantage.

"This provision will level the playing field for the Port of Terrebonne," said Rep. Melancon.

"Energy ports shouldn't be at a disadvantage in asking for improvements just because they are not traditional import-export hubs."

· ***New Orleans to Venice Levee System***

· Portions of levees in Plaquemines Parish now incorporated into the Federal system

· ***Regional Visitor Center, Atchafalaya Basin***

- The Corps of Engineers will work with the state in developing a visitor's center in Morgan City, LA.

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